

Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., today said, "In the midst of a heated and negative fight over a United Arab Emirates (UAE) company owning six ports in the U.S., some good was accomplished in the Appropriations Committee. Last night during an Appropriations Committee meeting I successfully offered an amendment to secure an additional \$50 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) for Liberia, Africa. It included \$30 million for emergency employment activities to strengthen security and build roads, \$10 million to establish an electricity grid and \$10 million to demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants.

"For the first time in more than two decades the Liberian people have an opportunity to rebuild their nation following the peaceful and transparent election of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman head of state in Africa. Under Charles Taylor, war-torn Liberia was the source of unprecedented instability and civil war in West Africa. Small arms trafficking, conflict diamonds, child soldiers and gratuitous amputations were the hallmark of Taylor's reign of terror throughout the region.

"Although a fragile peace now prevails in Liberia, remnants of various rebel groups remain a serious threat. Liberia needs immediate political and economic reconstruction assistance for critical high impact projects to build public confidence in the new government, and to address critical pressing needs including public works projects, civil service reform, security sector reform, and emergency employment for demobilized child and youth soldiers.

"Over the last two and a half years we have provided resources to Liberia culminating in the successful, transparent and peaceful election of the first female head of state on the African continent. But now, more than ever, we need to ensure that this investment is not squandered. Liberia is at a crucial turning point. The next few months will be critical in determining whether peace and democracy prevail or whether political instability, the threat of violence, rampant corruption and criminality burgeon anew. This \$50 million will help in Liberia's transition to a stable democracy and I want to thank Chairman Jerry Lewis (R-CA) and the full committee for its bipartisan support," Jackson concluded.